

POLITICAL NOTES

Vol 2 No 8 - 5¢ Group of Revolutionary Marxists Nov. 20, 1946

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REPORT ON MEXICO

The flat country just south of the border is desert country which lasts until one enters the mountains. Driving is hazardous because cattle wander across the road, ~~grazing on either side~~, even in the very steep mountains. Peasants, either on burros, or walking barefoot, pass all the time. They usually carry bundles either on the back or in front of them on the donkey.

One of the first things one notices is the single room, windowless, thatched huts along the road. Cooking is apparently done outside over charcoal braziers. These huts are the dwelling units of the mass of the rural population. The peones sleep on straw mats on the bare ground inside the hut. We saw a better type of house in an ejido in the state of Tlaxcala. Here the walls were made of adobe brick instead of boards or twigs. There was a floor -- made of clay -- some pieces of furniture, 2 beds instead of the usual straw mat, and a chamber pot.

The huts are usually set in or alongside small plots of land, but the majority of inhabitants are by no means small, independent proprietors. Usually they work on the nearby estate or in the sugar factory. There are different forms of sharecropping, with wages running to about 30 or 40¢ a day. The land, even that on which the huts stand, is owned by the big hacendados.

Some of the mountainous country looks green and rich, but there are whole sections elsewhere which are dry, eroded, barely yielding a scrubby growth. Lack of irrigation and modern farm machinery was ~~obvious~~ wherever we went. One hacienda (landed estate) which we saw at closer range had a single steam engine which apparently constituted the mechanization of the estate.

Practically each town or little settlement has its ancient Spanish church. Judging from the religious pictures in the houses and from the little shrine over the driver's seat in each Mexico City bus, the Catholic religion has a big hold over the population. But there exists also a strong anti-clerical feeling. The reform laws of the 1890's confiscated the church lands which were then about 80% of the arable land of the country. The 1910 revolution enforced and extended these restrictions. Religious orders are forbidden, monks and nuns may not appear on the streets in the garb of their orders. Even the church buildings belong to the government and are only operated by the clergy.

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There are schools along the roadside too. Usually they are one-room, adobe structures. The school term is the 10 months from February to December. The cooler months are vacation time, to avoid heating costs. Illiteracy is very high; the number of years of required schooling is much less than in the U.S. There are big posters in the city calling for the stamping out of illiteracy but the general corruption and demagoguery of the government offer no guarantee that they intend to do so. Mexico City has several big schools -- we saw a new one which has 2 large, impressive murals in the hall depicting education as progress to communism, including red flag, hammer and sickle and all.

Sunday is market day. Peasants bring part of their produce to the villages. In the centers there are market buildings or market places, mercedes. This is true even in Mexico City. Not all selling is left to market day, however. Everywhere, someone is peddling something. A peasant will spread a cloth on the sidewalk and place neat piles of oranges on it; this constitutes his store.

The Mexico City Mercado by no means sells only native products. On the contrary, for blocks surrounding the market place there are stalls displaying mass-produced commodities such as combs, work clothes, Woolworth jewelry, pots and pans, etc. The tourist may be attracted by native Indian handicraft but the worker who can afford it, likes the machine-made products. Generally the choicest native products find their way to the expensive shops in the Europeanized shopping center.

Mexico City: Old and New

Mexico City itself is a modern metropolis with all the modern appurtenances -- bus system, shops and stores, university, library, factories, football, baseball, movies. Products however are of poor quality. For example, the transportation system: Second class busses are rickety, second-hand looking affairs with wooden seats. Attached to each bus is a boy, paid by the driver, who collects fares. Originally the bus lines were made up of independently owned busses, but now they are pretty much trustified into one concern.

Though there is a building boom on, materials are of low quality and in short supply. Wherever you go, you are bound to run across half-finished walls -- projects abandoned due to lack of materials. Modern apartments are going up but boys covered with newspapers sleep on the street in the corners of the new downtown buildings.

Many restaurants serve the best food. The worker or peasant eats tortillas -- flat cakes made of corn meal -- and beans. A whole layer of people below the proletariat regularly pick over the garbage piles as a means of subsistence.

Mexico is experiencing a capitalist boom promoted by the shortage of goods during the war and the entrance of "fugitive" capital imported from Europe to escape the war and from the US to escape the wartime taxes. The cost of living is soaring and the subject of much comment by everyone. But these familiar capitalist developments are taking place in a country with a very different background from the US.

In the 14 years from 1930 to 1944, manufacturing industry has undergone tremendous expansion. Capital invested has risen about $3\frac{1}{2}$ times (1930-979,579,483 pesos; 1944-3,453,282,412) and the value of the product has gone up more than 5 times (from 900,332,923 in 1930 to 4,801,590,614 pesos in 1944). Nor has this growth been primarily through the starting of new concerns; that is to say from the growth in the number of new enterprises. Rather, it shows a beautiful example of the law of combined development: that in backward countries the dominance of the big corporation with more capital, modern machinery, and big plants is directly established without going through a long process of merging little concerns into big ones such as occurred in those countries which developed earlier.

The table from which the above figures were taken gives a graphic picture of this development:

Year	Units	Investments	Production	Employed	Wages, Salar's
1930	48,850	979,529,483	900,332,923	318,763	181,061,777
1935	6,916	649,103,821	918,759,599	225,729	181,365,605
1940	13,510	3,134,907,342	3,115,388,581	389,953	568,371,284
1944	50,998	3,453,282,412	4,801,590,614	512,399	1,002,223,106

(Pp. 96-97, "Report of the Secretariat of Economics" for 1945-1956. The electrical, photographic and oil industries are not included.)

The 1930 and 1944 figures include establishments of all sizes. Those for 1935 and 1940 include only those units with an annual production of 10,000 pesos or more (\$2,000 and up). It can be seen that the main growth of Mexican industry has been in the size of concerns, i.e. centralization of capital. While from 1930 to 1944 the total number of concerns rose only 2,148; in 1940 as compared to 1935 there were 6,594 more concerns producing above \$2,000 worth of goods yearly.

The figures of investment tell the same story. In 1935, average investment in firms producing more than \$2,000 annually was 93,855 pesos while in 1940 it was 232,043 pesos. In the number of workers employed, centralization manifests itself again. From 1930 to 1944, 193,636 new workers entered industry. But in the 5-year period, 1935-40, the number of workers employed by firms producing more than \$2000 annually jumped 162,224. These richer firms showed a much higher rate of increase per annum in the number of workers employed than did industry as a whole.

20 Men And One Mixer

This rapid expansion of industry is taking place in a backward country. Evidences of this greet one at every hand. In Mexico City one observes that though concrete for house construction may be mixed in a modern concrete mixer, it is transported and poured by hand in 5-gallon oil cans with the tops cut off. Wheelbarrows, metal chutes, ropes and pulleys are still more expensive than labor. As many as 20 men will stand on a big ladder passing 5-gallon oil cans up and down to get concrete to the roof of a two-story house.

Another indication of the country's backwardness is the large number of peddlers to be seen everywhere. In a US city, the bulk of the merchandising is carried on by stores which make use of trucks,

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advertising, wage-workers in transporting and selling their wares. Merchandising in the US is, in short, a highly organized capitalist enterprise comparable to manufacture. Not so in Mexico. Outside a factory containing the most modern machinery a street peddler will spread a cloth on the sidewalk, arrange his or her wares in neat little piles thereon, and start doing business. These peddlers may be peasants in from the country to supplement their miserable income by selling farm produce or the products of home industry, or they may be part of the mass of people who find they can exist just as well or better by petty trading as they can by working for low wages or eking out an existence on the land.

The goods peddled cover the whole run of things which can be carried by one or two people, - from live chickens and small pigs, on through all kinds of farm produce, personal apparel, household goods and cooked food, to silver jewelry and, last but not least, lottery tickets for the government operated lotteries. Manufactured goods are peddled the same as products of home industry. Let a store in Mexico City advertise a sale; its entrances will probably be surrounded by sidewalk merchants selling identical products for less money.

Mexico City has a large number of regular stores and it is probable that the bulk of the city's merchandise is sold through them. We do not mean to convey the idea that peddlers carry on all the trade. The point we wish to make is the relatively much greater number of people who make their living by petty trade in Mexico. It is important as an aspect of Mexico's backwardness and as a factor in supporting and renewing petty-bourgeois, individualist buying-and-selling points of view and tendencies among the proletarians.

Peon And Proletarian

This in turn is merely an aspect of the general position of the Mexican proletariat. Including the photographic and oil workers, the manufacturing proletariat in 1946 numbers from 550,000 to 600,000 workers. The total population of Mexico in 1946 is reported at 22,695,912. This means percentagewise that the manufacturing proletariat is about .022 of the general population. In the US, where the workers in manufacturing industries are about 17,000,000 out of a general population of 130,000,000, the comparable figure would be about .27. A shorter way of expressing the same relationship is to cite the fact that 80% of Mexico's population lives on the farm.

What is the significance of these figures? They mean that in Mexico the proletariat tends to be swamped ideologically because of its numerical weakness. Not only does this situation promote petty-bourgeois illusions; there is also a strong tendency for workers to regard the bourgeoisie itself as their natural ally in struggling against low living standards and bad conditions which are attributed to the semi-feudal conditions existing in the countryside. Due to this situation Lombardo Toledano, trade-union leader of the CTM, can get away with preaching an open class collaborationist line.

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"Labor well knows", said Toledano in an address delivered to a workers' mass meeting in Mexico City on August 5, 1945, "that so long as industrialization does not take place, so long as material conditions are not improved, so long as the country retains its pre-capitalist commodity economy and does not reach the industrial stage we shall have scant chance of obtaining genuine independence economic or political emancipation."

Of course, Toledano is dead wrong when he implies that Mexico does not have a capitalist economy. A thousand proofs could be adduced to show that capitalism is the dominant, motive force in Mexican society. But we wish to bring out another point. Due to the state of Mexican class relations, Toledano attempts to prove the correctness of his class-collaborationist line with quotations of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Phil Murray, Bill Green and John L. would probably faint dead away if they were asked to deliver such a "radical" speech. On the other hand, Murray, Green & Co. were forced by the workers in the US to call a number of big strikes in the last year to gain wage increases. While Toledano, despite his so-called Marxist and radical talk has been able to avoid calling industry-wide strikes despite Mexico's soaring cost of living. What makes this "radical" more conservative than the conservatives? Primarily, because he can get away with it due to the lower class consciousness and class pressure of the Mexican proletariat. Mexican workers have struck and, for example the oil workers, have struck on an industry-wide basis, but there has not been a movement such as there was in the US where the union bureaucracy was forced to act and the official machinery of the union was utilized.

"Left" Class Collaboration

Toledano's class-collaboration was not limited to statements alone. As president of the Latin American Confederation of Labor, he actually signed a pact with the "anti-imperialist" bourgeoisie of Mexico, the first paragraph of which reads:

"In this hour of decision for the destinies of mankind and our country, we, the industrialists and workers of Mexico, have agreed to unite and strive side by side to win the full economic independence of the nation, for national economic development, and for higher material and cultural standards for the great masses of our people."

The beginning of the third paragraph reads:

"We, the industrialists and workers of Mexico, hope through this union, to build a modern Mexico, with a culture and a prosperity comparable to the most advanced countries of the world..."

And at the conclusion of his address, Toledano drew the political conclusion from his class-collaborationist position: the workers must vote for Aleman, the government party candidate, in the national elections.

As we said at the beginning of this article, Mexican industry

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 was expanding at a great rate even before Toledano signed the labor-industry pact. Economic development on a capitalist basis was thus assured - pact or no pact. It remains to show what is occurring in regard to Toledano's two other objectives: national independence and better standards for the masses.

The government figures for 1945-46 show that 80.4% of Mexican exports go to the US and that 82.6% of Mexican imports come from the US. Undoubtedly, this means economic subordination of Mexican to US economy. But what steps is the capitalist Mexican government which Toledano supports, taking in this matter? Ostensibly, it is encouraging the growth of Mexican industry. New industries started in Mexico are granted 5 years exemption from taxes. Companies are required by law to have a majority of their capital controlled by Mexican citizens.

Independence?

This last law serves to mask but does not change the dominance of US capital. Essentially, it serves only to secure to the Mexican bourgeoisie the right of being compradores for the US imperialists. It is immaterial to everybody but the compradores whether US capital operates openly or through Mexican dummies. Because of the stabilization of Mexican capitalism by the Cardenas-Camacho regimes and because of higher taxes in the US, US capital is flowing into Mexico in large quantities. Industrialization of Mexico, i.e., the utilization of this capital, does not change the fact of continued US imperialist control.

The extent of US control is shown by a little event of some two years ago. During the war, US advertising companies set up branches or organized new companies in Mexico City and cornered a large part of the advertising business. These companies took it on themselves to censor published comments about the United States through their control of advertising. A small magazine, indiscreet enough to print a few lines of editorial criticism about the US, found itself suddenly put out of business by the withdrawal of the majority of its advertisements.

Real Inflation

As for raising the standards of the masses, the effect of this period of industrial expansion on the workers is best shown by the two tables of government figures reproduced below:

Legal Minimum Daily Wages in the Federal District, Mexico, pesos

<u>Year</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Country</u>
1934-35	1.50	1.00	100%	100%
1935-37	2.00	1.30	133%	130%
1938-39	2.50	1.65	166%	165%
1940-41	2.50	1.65	166%	165%
1942-43	2.50	1.65	166%	165%
1944-45	3.60	2.45	240%	245%
1946	4.50	----	300%	----

(The Minimum Salary, by the Nat'l Economic Secretariat)

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 Workers Cost of Living in Mexico City (i.e., the Federal District)

<u>Year</u>	<u>General</u>	<u>Food</u>	<u>Clothes</u>	<u>Domestic Utilities</u>
1934	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
1936	114.22	113.58	117.99	114.68
1938	153.30	157.87	143.55	132.97
1940	156.98	153.62	185.53	151.50
1942	188.61	178.90	243.11	197.97
1944	310.41	297.10	388.07	320.54
1946 Jan.	377.30	374.54	443.49	334.16
" June	412.08	412.04	469.65	360.29

Well knowing that capitalist government figures on the rise of the workers' cost of living are probably gross underestimates, we conclude that the real wages (what the money will buy) of the workers in Mexico City is at least 25% lower in June of 1946 than in 1934.

Few Strikes

The trade union movement has a peculiar character. Policy of the leadership is to support the government and to be as nationalistic as possible, at the same time talking "our revolution" and using a lot of social demagogy. The abyss between wages and prices has not moved them to strike action for higher pay. The petroleum workers walked out at the beginning of September because they did not get a new contract. "Nationalization" and "government-labor ownership" leave the trade union representatives with only the power to approve the government proposals. (Not that they would willingly do anything harmful to the bourgeoisie.) The oil workers are apparently among the most militant for they have taken direct action to better their conditions.

"The army has kept machine-guns mounted and manned in the oil fields since the oil industry was nationalized in 1937. When the oil workers struck, the government sent more troops who marched the workers to their jobs at bayonet point. Then the officers told the workers: 'Now work or we'll shoot you down.' The workers answered: 'You'll have to see our union officers about anything like that. We are on strike.' When the general in charge saw he would have to open fire or back down, he called up President Camacho on the telephone and the government compromised, granting a peso a day raise (20¢ US). But the oil workers went back to work only on the understanding that the rest of their pay demand would be further negotiated."

That was the September strike of the oil workers as seen through the eyes of a Mexican worker, whose information, we have every reason to believe is correct.

According to this comrade, the union bureaucracy really perpetrated a betrayal of the poorest section of the proletariat -- the agricultural workers. In return for a program of wage and hour reforms, union recognition, etc., they made a deal with the Cardenas government to leave the land workers alone. Up to then, there had been a union of land workers. Now there exists in its stead a government federation to which all rural laborers must belong and which permits no freedom with regard to deciding hours, wage rates, etc.

Squatters in Tlaxcala

We investigated a situation at Capulac in the State of Tlaxcala where the peones had organized a demonstration for land. In defiance of a Supreme Court ruling, 2000 of them had squatted for several days on untilled land belonging to a neighboring hacienda. They started to build huts and remained on the hacienda land -- despite all pleadings of government officials -- until they were removed by troops of the national army.

107 of the 189 families living in Capulac own no land and have to subsist by day labor on the surrounding estates for which they receive 70 centavos in cash and three bushels of ears of corn -- about thirty cents a day, US, all together. The other 82 families own small plots which they received under the government land program. Six years of legal proceedings in the courts of "the government of the national revolution" failed to win any land for the landless. Instead, the Supreme Court guaranteed the surrounding haciendas from being broken up for 25 years. We are told that peasant demonstrations like the one at Capulac occur almost every month in Mexico. After 12 years of bragging, double-talk and half-measures by the "national revolutionary government", the mass of the Mexican peones find themselves no better off than when Cardenas first took office.

Mexico's need for industrialization cannot be denied. But the experience of the Mexican workers shows that industrialization under capitalism brings a minimum of national independence, social and economic improvement. The existence of big industry in Mexico, the existence of an organized and in some sections, highly developed and advanced proletariat, make it possible for the Mexican proletariat in alliance with the poor peasantry to establish its dictatorship and industrialize the country under workers power, on the basis of socialism. That is the only complete and satisfactory answer to the situation of the Mexican proletariat today. 10/31/46

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T H E A N T I - L Y N C H L O B B Y

The lynching in Monroe, La., the riot in Columbia, Tenn., etc. have served the Stalinists as a springboard from which to launch an antilynching campaign whose main purpose is to "bombard" the members of the new Congress. Lynch law which knows nothing of congresses is to be fought by bill-passing! On Sept. 23, there was a demonstration in Washington D.C. at which Robeson and other leading lights spoke. A delegation went in to see the President and got nothing for their pains. Undeterred by this, the demonstration passed a resolution about "impressing the President and Congress of the United States with the urgent necessity of enacting effective legislation to stop lynching promptly upon the convening of the Eightieth Congress in January one hundred days hence." This they said and nothing more.

Sunday, Oct. 27th, the Washington Park Open Forum devoted the afternoon to the question. The "Crusade to End Lynching" wants another

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"mass lobby" in Washington to the 80th Congress. A speaker brought out the very interesting point that Georgia has one of the best streamlined anti-lynch laws in the country (Wonder how the 4 victims of the Monroe lynch mob felt about that law?). Yet when it was suggested in discussion that extra-legal terror-- which is exactly what the speaker called lynching -- could be fought only by direct defense action, and that legislation was a snare and a delusion, the Stalinists rallied to the colors: people have to be taught gradually, how can anyone preach direct action, etc. And as for the suggestion that it was part of the terror used against the working class and should be met by working class struggle against the capitalist system -- they had no use for that either. Rather, the line presented by the speaker was that Fascism had divided the German people (evidently, before Hitler, German was that rare thing -- a classless society) and lynching was a means of dividing the American people (there are no classes in the U.S. either?)

The "American Crusade to End Lynching" serves to channelize the indignation and resentment of Negro and white workers at the latest brutality perpetrated by the capitalist class in the South into lobbying -- a form of protest sure to get the least results. The lynching in Georgia was done with the aid of the law. As for Congress, the government in Washington is a capitalist government interested in maintaining capitalist rule in the South as elsewhere. The U.S. army -- clearest expression of government policy -- followed a Jim Crow policy, discriminated against Negro soldiers, pushed them around, used the MP force against them. Anyone who thinks that lobbying in Congress is going to change conditions in the South, just hasn't been able to learn anything at all from the past 50 years.

Extra-legal terror is a method of class rule. It should not be forgotten that organizers and "reds" have been lynched in the South and West, regardless of their color. The ruling class all over the world resorts to unspeakable brutalities to keep the wage slaves down. Lynching can be fought only by the workers and toiling masses organizing to defend themselves against the actual menace. Georgia's fancy anti-lynch bill and all the good will in the world from the North didn't save the Malcolms and Dorseys of Monroe, Georgia.

As a matter of fact, the militant Negro worker feels in his heart of hearts that legislative hanky-panky isn't going to do any good. Trouble is, no other force presents itself with a program of action on this question and the result is that the loud-talking Stalinists (who didn't give a tinker's damn for the Negro worker during the war because they were so busy trying to keep the US "united") get the support. Meetings against lynching should be taken out of the hands of liberals and collaborationists and transformed into militant working class demonstrations.

The burning question is how to organize defense against lynching. The idea that "education" comes before defense is merely a polite way of saying: "Turn the other cheek!" 11/2/6

CHICAGO VETERANS ORGANIZE SQUATTERS MOVEMENT

At 60th and Keeler Ave. in Chicago the government has built a block-big housing project for veterans and their families. The buildings, which have the same architectural style as army barracks, are divided up into 2, 3, and 4-room units - jerry-built of green lumber and composition board; stove-heated; showers - no bathtubs; recesses with shelves over which a curtain may be hung - no closets; 2-burner gas plates, no oven - in the 2 room units; windows without sash-cord or locks; and wooden fire-escapes for the 2d-story flats. The rent is \$25 for 2 rooms, \$29.50 for 3, and \$32.50 for 4, and are rented to veterans only. "A world fit for heroes to live in" - 1946 model.

To the veterans living in basements and single rooms or crowded in with their in-laws, or those who had to live separately from their wives for lack of space -- to these veterans in the neighborhood of 60th and Keeler the jerry-built housing project looked like a dream. It meant to them a place of their own for their wives and children. It meant living with their wives again, a room for the kids so they would not have to sleep in the same bed, moving out of a damp basement, getting out of the crowded flats (and the hair) of their in-laws, getting their own furniture out of storage, or whatever the individual case might be. For a year, they have watched the buildings going up and being finished. For 6 to 8 months they have had their applications in with the Chicago Housing Authority. For six weeks prior to November 5 they saw 62 of the 186 flats standing finished and vacant while the Chicago Housing Authority gave them the run-around shunting them from office to office and finally told a number of them that their applications were "lost" and could not be found.

The night of November 4th, a group of these veterans from the neighborhood apparently went to a Democratic ward meeting asking what was going to be done for them. Evidently the local politicians, put on the spot the night before election day, hinted that the best thing to do was to move in. (The exact sequence of events is not clear; the boys are "not talking" about it.)

"While a crowd which included 20 women and several children stood outside, 16 veterans entered the quarters of Albert Horn, 4129 W. 60th place, caretaker of the project and shouted:

"Are you going to give us the keys to those 60 vacant apartments or shall we take them away from you? If we can't find them, we'll get in some way.

"We don't like the way the government is handling veterans' housing and we're going to show you what we can do."

Horn offered no resistance, and the veterans seized a rack of 80 keys, some of which were for occupied apartments in the 186-unit project. Horn notified Edward Hart, Chicago Housing Authority veterans' housing manager...

The veterans, meanwhile, had passed out the keys, giving those for larger apartments to ex-service men with families. When police

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arrived, the crowd disappeared, but two and a half hours later, after the police had departed, the veterans returned." (Chicago Herald-American, November 5th, 1946)

The veterans have formed a committee headed by Paul Principato who served 2½ years in the European theater and received the Rhine Crossing Medal and a presidential citation. He was in Patton's outfit and thinks that Patton was the best general the army had. He is a strong Democrat and sincerely regrets Roosevelt's death, feeling that "things would have been different" if he had lived. After his return from the army, he bought a small grocery store and truck in partnership with his brother. The truck has come in handy to move the furniture of six or eight of his buddies into the housing project without charge.

The committee's efforts seem to be directed primarily to rallying the support of the veterans' organizations. Most of the participants in the movement belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and they want to rally the support of the other posts and of the American Legion and make their regional and national officials support their act

"Police Commissioner Prendergast, to whom Elizabeth Wood, Executive secretary of the Chicago Housing Authority, went yesterday with a request that police evict the 'squatters', said the problem was one for the CHA to solve 'by due process of law', and that the police department would take no steps to oust any veterans from any houses."

"Mayor Kelly also termed it a CHA problem and said he did not intend to enter into the dispute. He added: 'I understand that every family who moved in there has an application on file with the CHA.'" (Chicago Tribune, November 7th, 1946)

The capitalist press and radio have given publicity to this event. The Herald-American devoted a page of pictures to it on November 5. Life magazine sent reporters to cover the committee meeting of November 7th and to take pictures. The NBC system arranged a nation-wide newscast at 6:15 November 8th, on which Charles Whittaker a member of the veterans' committee spoke.

Looking at the general national housing situation, it appears that a conspiracy exists to smash housing and rent controls so that speculation and profiteering can reign supreme. It is similar to the conspiracy between meat packers, commission houses and farmers which successfully smashed price-controls on meat. In Illinois, the number of certificates granted for industrial and commercial buildings has been going up and the number for residential building has been going down in the last few months. Certainly it is inconceivable that an economy which housed an army of millions, constructed a navy, and at the same time turned out all manner of war material should suddenly find itself physically incapable of building houses. The answer to this puzzle will probably turn out to be that the banks, construction materials companies, and contractors are consciously holding scarce materials off the market to force higher prices. They are undoubtedly abetted and aided in this by the landlord interests who are making plenty now due to the housing shortage and who would make

The action of the veterans at 60th and Keeler can serve as grist for the mill of this conspiracy if it can be limited to a purely veterans' movement and be presented as an "American" answer to "government bungling". And, most important, if it can be limited to occupation of government, i.e., public, property. The CHA is attempting to pit veteran against veteran and reduce it to a question of whether a squatter veteran should move into a flat which, they say, was going to be given to a veteran with 4 children. On this basis, the struggle degenerates into a complete dead-end. That is exactly what the capitalist housing conspirators want.

On the other hand, this provides the radical and labor movements with an issue which can be used to promote a squatters' movement similar to the one in Britain. A large section of the working class is miserably housed and pays exorbitant rent. Housing for veterans is only one aspect of the problem. The essential point is to turn the weight of the movement against private property. Government housing is only a drop in the bucket compared to the number of privately owned houses which are standing vacant for reasons of speculation, or the number of newly constructed houses in which some of the plumbing has been left out so they can stand "unfinished" until the price ceilings are removed. A first step in a progressive development of this issue is to involve the various labor organizations and change its character from a purely veterans' movement to a working class movement.

The Chicago Housing Authority, 343 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 4, sent notices on November 6th to the 60 some veterans involved, stating that "you are unlawfully upon the premises" and that "you are hereby notified to depart...Legal action will be taken promptly to enforce this order". As a first step to promote a squatters' movement, the trade unions, radical and fraternal working class organizations should send resolutions of protest to Robert R. Taylor, chairman of the CHA, and to other public officials, demanding that they do not evict these 60 veterans and that every dwelling now standing vacant, public or private, be immediately opened for occupancy at reasonable rents.

This incident on Chicago's Westside shows that conditions are ripe for a working class offensive on the housing question. But resolutions, of course, mean nothing by themselves. Such a movement must either spread to other neighborhoods and other cities or be choked off and smothered by the bourgeoisie and their state.

November 9th, 1946

In the interest of furthering the squatters' movement, the above article was made available to the INDUSTRIAL WORKER and LABOR VIEWS, 2 publications claiming to oppose the capitalist system. The editors of both organs deleted the final paragraphs relating to the necessity to extend the fight for housing to a fight against capitalist private property -- without our permission. In our opinion, this small experience underlines the need for a revolutionary Marxist paper that will handle the working class struggle without flinching from the conclusions.

?? "HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN" ??

Insofar as there were any issues in the November 5th elections, they centered around the question of the amount of control of the economy which the various sections of the bourgeoisie feel to be necessary. 14 years ago, the Democratic Party was swept into office to bail US capitalism out of its profound crisis. This was accomplished by the intervention of the government into numerous spheres of the economy with money and regulations which lessened the worst contradictions. The war and the war economy required even more government regulation and government financing.

Now the war has been won by the US, the question arises: to what extent, on the basis of this victory, can the US bourgeoisie free themselves of the governmental controls which were necessary during the depression and war years? This question has presented itself in the form of a number of issues in the past few months. The movement to abolish price controls (meat, etc.), to reduce taxes, to take a more hostile attitude toward organized labor (revision of the Wagner Act, etc.), to acquire open domination of the world ("hard" policy toward Russia, opposition to the British loan, etc) - this movement is motivated by a desire of the US imperialists to cash in on their victory and "devil take the hindmost." The elections have transferred the political power to that section of the bourgeoisie which wants to cash in as quickly as possible. This does not mean, of course, that US imperialism will suddenly revert to rugged individualism. That would be impossible, for it is impossible to maintain capitalist rule in its imperialist decay stage without widespread intervention and support by the capitalist state. But it does signify a strengthening of the "de-control" tendency which has been obvious in recent months.

Winning the war confronts the US also with the task of policing large areas of the world. There is difference again as to what to do with Germany, how best to combat the USSR. The US is threatened by the revolutionary working class of Asia and Europe, and cannot effectively keep peace as long as the soviet productive system exists. The election results appear to support the State Department's policy as against that of Wallace.

What Price "Progressive Political Action"?

The heavy vote indicated that a large section of the working class, as well as the farmers and petty bourgeoisie, supported the Republican candidates. Those workers who voted Republican, thinking they were voting against the high cost of living, government anti-labor action in the recent strikes, etc., will soon be disillusioned. The Republican majority in Congress is guaranteed to continue the policy of the Democratic majority in the vitally important business of pushing the costs of the war off onto the working class. Unfortunately, the old tweedledum-tweedledee setup still works and no revolutionary working class political party has appeared to challenge the "control-decontrol," "progressive political action" phrases of the bourgeoisie.

I D E A S A L S O C O U N T

A sheet-metal worker has just given a \$25 contribution to POLITICAL NOTES. This is a sizeable chunk from a worker's pay check. It shows the value this worker attaches to receiving a revolutionary Marxist discussion of current events and theoretical questions.

Another comrade has asked us to emphasize the fact that PN is open to contributions of articles, letters, polemics, etc. We are glad to do so.

We started PN a little over a year ago in the belief that there was a definite need for a revolutionary Marxist political organ. We have succeeded in drawing a number of comrades into writing for PN - both in discussing ideas presented and in contributing non-polemical material. There is a need for still more of this.

The imperialist war; the military defeat of 3 out of the 6 imperialist nations; the emergence of the US as the most powerful; the involvement of the Soviet Union in the imperialist war and the changing class relations within the SU's borders; the national and colonial risings which are taking place -- these events confront revolutionists with a host of problems requiring a Marxist answer. Our belief is that no group can claim to speak with authority on any of a dozen questions confronting us and that the exchange of ideas and information on these subjects is essential to their solution.

Most of the discussion which now takes place in the movement is in the nature of adaptation of old formulas to "explain" current events or of sitting new events and situations to justify a course of action decided on beforehand. The basic assumptions of Marxism have been so sorely neglected or abused in this process that confusion and misapprehension are rife. The road to power, for example, was the subject of a theoretical and practical struggle between the social democracy and the 3rd International in the years after the first world war. As a result, large numbers of workers learned the basic Marxist tenet that a forceful social revolution is necessary for the transfer of power from one class to another. Today, however, with the Stalinists pursuing a reformist line and the growth of labor party sentiment among the centrists, the number of workers who understand the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state has been reduced to a scattered handful.

The necessity exists, therefore, to re-examine constantly Marxist teachings and to apply Marxian concepts to the solution of the problems we face. It is necessary to consciously encourage organized political discussion directed to the definite end of influencing the class struggle in a revolutionary direction.

The strength of a revolutionary organization flows from the working class; from the struggles of proletariat against bourgeoisie. It is apparent, however, that the increased intensity of the class struggle and the national and colonial risings following the war have not resulted in an automatic growth of strength and solid-

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rity among revolutionary workers. The tendency is for radicals to become absorbed in the existing reformist and centrist organizations and forget to evaluate the changing class relations. We would like to counter passivity and defeatism by stressing and advertising the struggles of the workers all over the world today.

Our aim is to create a revolutionary center -- a group based on the workers' struggles, drawing its strength and inspiration from them, presenting a revolutionary Marxist analysis of the class struggle. POLITICAL NOTES is a step toward that goal.

We again urge those who have not yet participated in POLITICAL NOTES to do so -- to join in the work toward our common goal. We urge other readers to consider seriously the value of POLITICAL NOTES and to make their contributions also -- be they financial or in the form of articles and letters.

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d i s c u s s i o n

DOES A REACTIONARY POLICY MEAN A REACTIONARY USSR?

We have accepted certain premises in the following discussion: that our analysis of the Soviet Union is known to the reader, that our specific criticism of the policy and of the bureaucracy is also known. We have made it abstract for the purpose of getting at the essence of the problem and for the purpose of comparison with the French Revolution. In no sense is our argument to be construed as a defense of the status quo nor of the idea that such development is inevitable. Essentially the article is motivated by the feeling that something basic is being overlooked, and that half a century from now the events and personalities which loom so large today will be merely names and dates, while the major aspect will occupy historians. On the anniversary of the October Revolution we find very little clarity, unfortunately, as to just what is to be celebrated.

The approach of discussion on Russia has been largely one of determining its class character through its political features. The concept that a phenomenon can be basically progressive and yet have a very reactionary or distorted expression has been overlooked.

The French Revolution placed in the saddle the bourgeoisie who had already won an important position in the economy. The capitalist system or the capitalist mode of production has characterized French economy since. The rise of Napoleon, the Bourbon restoration, etc., did not succeed in controverting the economy, though landed and other interests battled for more favorable positions and politically may have had on occasion greater representation than the bourgeoisie. The elements at the head of the state nevertheless had to conform to the demands of bourgeois economy despite the other and alien interests they personally represented.

If this be true of the bourgeois revolution and capitalist eco-

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nemy, why is it so inconceivable when app;ooed to proletarian revolution and transition economy? As a historical phenomenon, divorced from the subjective pictures and desires of the revolutionists, why cannot the October Revolution be recognized as a step forward? If a superior mode of production was established on the basis of the capitalist mode of production, there is no reason to assume that it can be controverted merely by the rise or fall of different groupings representing different strata of the population.

The state in the Soviet Union is forced, however badly, to carry on the functions of a proletarian state, the functions dictated by the transition economy. An armed defense against armed intervention has been conducted, the expansion and development of industry occurs under state direction.

The struggles and capitalist practices appear, on this background, as aspects of the fierce class struggle taking place in the transition economy. They are no more and no less counter-revolutionary than the Bourbon restoration. The economy exists, production on a new basis continues.

The question of extending or strengthening this economy cannot be answered at all if the picture is approached subjectively -- i.e. if the job is conceived in terms only of the groupings in the superstructure. For then the policy of these groupings and their ideology became the determinant. For a line of promoting the material development of transition society toward socialism, and of spreading the workers' revolution to other countries, is substituted a line of ideological battle against the leadership grouping in the superstructure.

With the Bolshevik Party at the helm, representing the proletarian revolution and the new economy, it was possible to identify the phenomenon as a whole with the state and with the groupings in the leadership. Support of the Bolshevik Party was the same thing as support to the workers revolution in Russia. The re-strengthening of world capitalism and the growth of capitalist forces within the Soviet Union were reflected in the realignment of forces in the superstructure. It was no longer possible to identify the dictatorship of the proletariat with the political leadership. Support of the leadership of Stalinists and bourgeois elements meant support to capitalism and not to the workers revolution. Nevertheless workers and revolutionists all over the world have continued to look to the Soviet state and to the bureaucracy for revolutionary guidance and inspiration. The bulk of the critics of the SU's leadership base themselves on the assumption that the bureaucracy of social reformists and capitalist representatives can and should give revolutionary leadership. Not receiving this, they curse out transition society as a whole in the manner of disappointed, disillusioned children.

Let us refer again to the French Revolution. To many European workers, peasants, petty bourgeois and bourgeois, it represented a beacon light. Even Napoleon's accession at first did not change this attitude. True, with the Napoleonic wars, and the failure of the French army and bourgeoisie to extend the bourgeois revolution

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to Europe, disgust and disillusionment came. Nevertheless the war, on the Holy Alliance was a war of the French bourgeoisie against a feudal camarilla. No matter what followed in the wake of the French army, its success meant the weakening of this cabal.

The main point we wish to bring out is that the essential character of French economy was not changed by its representatives on the battlefield nor by its conquests in Europe. It did not bring liberty, equality and fraternity all over Europe, but it did establish a higher mode of production. Napoleon was not the French Revolution. The French army was not the bearer of the bourgeois revolution wherever it went. Class relations in Europe however were disturbed by its advance.

The parallel is clear. We should not look to the Red Army nor the Soviet bureaucracy to be the bearers of world revolution. We should understand that it is necessary to fight the Red Army insofar as it helps to maintain capitalism in Europe. We should understand that Stalin or Zhukov will not spread the proletarian revolution to Europe or Asia. And we should understand that in spite of this transition economy and a proletarian dictatorship exist in Russia.

Those who are concerned only with the more superficial developments, the surface indications, will say flatly that they don't care what the economy is in Russia, since it exists only in Russia and supports a bureaucracy which in every respect shows to them a capitalist face. The question then becomes one of: just exactly what are we striving for? Or, to put it objectively: what constitutes progress?

The establishment of transition economy in the Soviet Union is the establishment of a new mode of production. This has for the world the same significance as any new development has had in the past. The establishment of new modes of production is the method whereby society raises itself to better conditions of life. We reiterate these simple things because so many have lost sight of them. The question has become confused to the point where people fight about the organization of a society without considering how it shall produce the means of subsistence, how it shall support a reorganization.

Man cannot lay out blueprints for the next stage of society. He is working with or against material forces that have a dialectic and development of their own. He can only influence and change them insofar as he understands the development of society and works with it. The Russian Revolution and the transition economy are part of society's development toward socialism. If the development has not the forms or the exact character envisaged, it cannot be merely dismissed. To gaze in horror and then run screaming "This isn't what I wanted!" will not change the reality. It is a material development which does not controvert the social revolution any more than the French Revolution and its working out did. If the working class has ushered in a new mode of production and therewith a new form of society, we would be much better served to analyze the foundations of this society, than to concentrate our attention on the transient developments of its superstructure, important though they may be.

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There is a tendency in dealing with the complicated development of the Soviet Union - retrogression in many respects, progress in others - to seek some simple formula which will account for everything. The would-be Marxists search for a Marxist formula; the non- and anti-Marxists look for another. This is a subjective approach. Marxism is a science, not a happy philosophy. The development of society is not the result of Marxism but vice versa. If we do not like or approve what happened, it will not be answered by going back and saying: this was not according to Marx in the first place. On the other hand, social development should not necessitate rejection of the scientific laws of historical materialism unless it be scientifically proven that society has developed to a point where new laws of social development come into force.

The form of society is still dependent on the mode of production. We have analyzed the mode of production in the Soviet Union (On The Class Character of Russia, PN, Apr. 13, 1946). We have shown the relation between this mode of production and the superstructure. We have described the class struggle in the Soviet Union (The Class Struggle in the USSR, PN, May 9, 1946). We believe that, far from being disproved by the Russian developments, scientific Marxism is again proven the only method of analysis of social development.

To conclude, we see world capitalism unable to establish any better or radically different production and distribution of the world's goods. We see that it rests with the working class which occupies a key position in the production process, to take over the means of production and to establish a socialist mode of production and distribution. We see this as the basic task all over the world. In the Soviet Union we are not faced with this task because the initial step has already been accomplished. We are faced there with the task of freeing the production process from the capitalist practices fastened on to it. This involves both a political and social housecleaning. It does not involve wresting the factories and the land from their individual owners and smashing their state apparatus -- as in capitalist countries. These are for us the inevitable conclusions to be drawn from a scientific Marxist analysis.

9/46

(4th Time This Year!)

R W L S P L I T S A G A I N

In May, Comrade Danly resigned from the RWL and its central committee in disgust at the right-wing economist policy, the low level and the bureaucracy. He addressed a letter to RWL members pointing out that of the 2 factions, neither had an adequate revolutionary program. particular he spoke to that grouping which claimed opposition to the economist orientation:

"The comrades who based themselves on the slogan 'Back to the 14 Points!' at the plenum were not able to counterpose a Marxist program to the revisionist program. They ended up with proposals for organization drives and campaigns on the old line. And what now? Wait for the convention - and then the next plenum - until LD and so on are thrown out bodily by the 'new' tendency - or until a compromise is reached? And what of the program and line and the objective situation in the meanwhile?" (Open Letter 8/9/46)

This is exactly what has happened. The LABOR VIEWS faction took over the Chicago outfit, and in effect threw out the "national organization." At a Sept. 19 Chicago membership meeting, the 15 RWLers present divided into 2 groups of 8 and of 7. The group of 8 support LABOR VIEWS. The group of 7 supports INTERNATIONAL NEWS and the FIGHTING WORKER. Both call themselves the Revolutionary Workers League.

On June 23, 1946, in PN, we analysed the developments in the RWL and showed that the group around LABOR VIEWS was an economist, opportunist tendency. We also pointed out that there was no principled difference between this group and the group around the RWL leadership. A striking confirmation is the motion offered to the September split meeting by the national secretary that the Chicago unit divide into 2, one section to support publication of LABOR VIEWS, the other to support the FIGHTING WORKER; and that a committee of 2 from each section be set up to "coordinate activities and attempt to heal the breach." (Our emphasis.)

Since the split neither group has issued any political explanation of why they parted ways. The LV group insists in a letter of Oct. 23 that "the RWL has ceased to exist outside of Chicago" and that "The central task of the League is the publication of Labor Views..." The FW group, without making any sharp condemnation of LABOR VIEWS' political line, insists that the FW and IN must be the official organs and that their political committee has higher authority than the Chicago city committee. The IN of Nov. 1946 devotes five (5) lines to a "Note" which says: "The RWL has no connection with a group of individuals who publish a glorified trade union sheet known as 'Labor Views' in Chicago." NB: The July 1946 FW advertises, "READ - LABOR VIEWS, Weekly organ of the Chicago Units of the RWL". This group consists of a few workers who split from the Chicago Unit of the League on 'localist, economist' positions. Material dealing with the political issues will appear in early issues."

We have suggested to the comrades who claim interest in the international struggle that they collaborate with us in international relief work which we consider essential and an excellent means of carrying out the idea of international class solidarity. We were told: "Take out membership cards in the RWL FW first"; and now after the split: "You will only disrupt."

We have suggested to the LV group that they use the columns of POLITICAL NOTES to discuss their political point of view since their paper is avowedly devoted to day-to-day agitation. So far, they have not availed themselves of this offer.

We very much fear that preoccupation with splitting, re-organizing and "re-orienting" and the talk now of re-unification is a method of revolving in a closed circle, which leaves the working class and its interests somewhere out in the cold. We urge comrades sincerely interested in building a revolutionary organization to follow the example of Comrade Danly. Break with the centrists, unite with the Marxists.

